

Interviewed by Mrs. Squires' 6th grade class at Lapoint Elementary on 18 March 1987.
Transcribed by Kathleen Irving, May 2001.

Merrill Rasmussen was raised in Lapoint and was 87 years old at the time of this interview.

Merrill Rasmussen: Merrill

Child interviewers are generally not identified by name. They will be identified here as "I".

I: Could you describe the first car your family had?

Merrill: You bet. That's what I brought this along for. [He is apparently referring to photographs.] Now the first car I ever saw in my lifetime was in Manti, Utah, in 1911 and it looked like this car up here, a Model T Ford. That's a Model T Ford, only in those days they were always black. I never seen a colored car until I'd moved to Lapoint five years later. So, the first car I ever saw looked like this one. Now the first car our family ever owned looked like this beautiful car. Don't you think that's a beautiful car?

Okay. I'm showing you that because it was a Buick and it cost \$1800. The Fords in them days cost \$500. I'm showing you this one, it's not exactly like the old Buick was, but it's got the exact same features. The Buick was white; it had wooden wheels; it had these white tires, tires about that big around and smooth as a billiard ball—there was no tread on them whatsoever. It had a big tire on the side here, for a spare tire and it had spare tires back behind the back seat and it had a tool box on here because you were always breaking down. You always had tools with you on your car in those days. There's the tool box.

Here's the presto light. Presto's like butane, it goes to make your lights go. When you went to light the light, you had to strike a match and light each light with a match. That's the way you turned the lights on your car. When you honked the car, like we do now, we just press the button and boom! It really bangs out! They just had a rubber bulb on the side of the car here and you'd just squeeze it and it went Honk! Honk! Honk! And that's the way they was. The engine cover was copper; the headlights was brass. Now this car hasn't got a top on it. All those features I've described is just like the old Buick that Dad bought.

Now, I'll show you this one here. That's the way the Buick looked when the top was raised up, like this one here. You see? Only I wanted to show you the other one because this is black and the one we got was white; the one Dad bought was white. But this has the tire on the side and the top folds down. I seldom ever see now a car with the top raised up. They always had the top laid down in those days so the wind would blow your hair, you know, when you were riding it, and if a little rainstorm come up, you'd grab a quilt and throw it over your head, or jump out in a hurry and raise the top up. That's the way things were, but it was fun!

That old car was *not* a family car. Dad bought it for a business and his business was hauling doctors and hauling lawyers and hauling judges to the neighboring towns for their businesses. They was the only ones that had money in those days and they could pay for a car and Dad made trips in from Nevada and down into Arizona with that old Buick car. He kept it for about six months and then he sold it. It wasn't really a paying business.

So now your next question there is, "How did the family use that car, like a trip to town?"

The family *didn't* use that car like a trip to town because we lived right square in town and we didn't have to have a car to go to town. We walked to town. Everywhere you went in those days, you walked. So we didn't need the car. So the car wasn't used too much by the family, but we did have a lot of fun riding in that old Buick car. But it looked like this one here. But it was white. This one is black and it was white and it hasn't got the top on, but this has the old Buick features, the white and the tires and the whole thing there. So that's the reason I showed you them there.

Mrs. Squire (MS): Were the cars easier to fix, and not as complicated?

Merrill: Oh, yes, the cars were more plain then. You couldn't fix a car like they are nowadays, they're too in detail, too technical, but in those days, why, golly, in my life, I'd always carry an extra axle in my car 'cause we were always breaking axles on the back wheel, letting the wheel drop down. Sometimes the front wheel dropped down, so we had to have repairs. So I always, in my life, up until about the 1940s, always carried an extra axle and a big toolbox with a lot of tools in it and a chain. We always had a chain and we always had our bed in the car, so when we broke down, we was right at home.

I broke down up Indian Canyon, halfway between here and Price one night and broke an axle and I had to send back to Myton to get an axle and the next day when the bus... There was a little old car, it was just a car that run between Helper and Myton, and they called that the stage. The next day when the stage come along, he didn't have an axle, so Dad was with me, so Dad jumped in that car and went to Helper to get an axle there and that meant I had to stay and we stayed there over one night when the stage come, and then we stayed there two nights and Dad was in Helper that night so I was there alone. I was kind of spooked up in there in the mountains, all alone, sleeping out there, and then when Dad come back the next day, why somebody from Myton had sent the axle up to me and I'd put it in and was up the head of the canyon when I met the bus coming in from Helper.

So, we used to break down a lot of times. I've had to take the whole motor out and put the pistons in 'em and tie rods. Up in these mountains. But we learned to do it.

I: What was it like to travel on old roads in cars?

Merrill: There was no paved roads in those days. They were dust and dirt and chuck holes and rocks and sand. Golly! I'll tell you, those roads was rough at that time. So, when you traveled with a car, you'd created a great big dust, you know, and if it got too much dust, why, you'd put a quilt up over your head to keep the dust off. That's what it was like traveling in those days.

I: Could you describe the car what it looked like inside.

Merrill: Well, it only had a front seat and a back seat. The back seat had doors so you could open the door and step in. The front seat only had one door and that was on the left hand side. The steering wheel was on the right hand side. Now the steering wheel on these cars are on the left hand side, but the steering wheel on that car was over on the right hand side and if you climbed out on that side, you had to climb up over that big tire. [Apparently he is showing them a photograph.] See, right here, see this has got doors on the back and if you climbed in the car on this side, you'd have to climb up over that big, high tire. But if you got in on the other side,

there's no door there at all, you just stepped in.

I: On those one cars, where did you keep the top?

Merrill: The top fastened down up here in front on the windshield. The windshield stood straight up. It went right straight from your feet, right straight up. Nowadays, of course, it comes like this and comes back this way and then the windshield goes up here. In those days, the windshield went right straight up from your toes, right just straight up. On top of that windshield there's two little clamps there. The top would fold up, it'd just lay back behind and it'd fold up like this and fasten on the windshield and then it would lay back down behind the car. They nearly always left it down. I don't remember riding in that car too much when the top was up.

I: How long would those cars hold together? Would they hold together better than they do today?

Merrill: I don't think so. Not now. However, the cars of ten years ago was better cars than they are now. But the cars of that day, in 1911—that was a 1911 car, now, you see, that was a long time ago—they were the new cars and not too well made. That old car only lasted about six months and then it begin to give trouble, so Dad sold it and went into the flour mill business. Then five years later—he sold that car for \$1000, traded it in on the flour mill—and five years later then he went out of the flour mill business and come to Lapoint. But he got that old car back, but the guy that bought it, never did use it. It was just sitting there in his shed. So, he got the car back for \$500. He sold it to him for \$1000 and got it back five years later for \$500, then I drove it from Sanpete County out here to Lapoint or to Roosevelt and we sold it over here to a Murray, Jerry Murray, I believe, or somebody like that, in Roosevelt, for a team of horses, a harness, a wagon and a plow. So, the old Buick come back right over here to Roosevelt and ended it. I never did see it after we got it into Roosevelt. But we moved out here in 1917 in that old Buick car and I drove it out here when we came.

I: Did you have driver's licenses or something like that back then?

Merrill: We didn't have to worry about driver's license in those days. It was a good many years after that before you ever had to worry about any driver's license or even the license on the car or plates or anything like that. You didn't have to worry about them for ten years after these cars first started.

I: How old did you have to be to drive a car?

Merrill: If you was just old enough to turn the steering wheel, you was old enough to drive. [Laughter] No, there was no law; there was no law about driving in those early days. If you owned a car, why anyone in the family could drive, *if* they could drive. When you drove is when your dad and mom felt like you could drive yourself.

I: Did policemen give tickets for speeding?

Merrill: We never had no policemen. In those days, why, we never even had a policeman. I don't

remember a policeman in Manti at all or Fairview. We moved from Manti to Fairview and when we come to Lapoint. We never had no policemen in Lapoint. We haven't got any policemen now. We never had no policemen in those days. So, things was all new, see. Cars, traveling at top speed was about twenty-five miles per hour. On a good part of the road that was smoothed out good so you could go fast, you could go twenty-five miles an hours in one of those cars.

I: When you were a little boy, did you get to work on these cars and light the matches?

Merrill: Oh, yes. I was eleven years old at that time. You kids are what?

MS: They're eleven.

Merrill: Just the same age. Sure, I was big enough that I thought I was quite a guy. I thought I could drive that car. I never did, though, not until I was seventeen. But I helped Dad light the match, you know, light the lights. Gosh, I thought I was helping him a lot. I'd toot the horn and things like that.

I: Describe what your school was like.

Merrill: Okay, the school in Manti was a great big, tall, two-story building with eight rooms in it, four rooms upstairs and four rooms downstairs. It was a brick building, well, it was just four big room, with halls running through it. In that particular school there was eight rooms, four downstairs and four upstairs. Nowadays, they don't build the schools in two stories on account of fire. They build the schools all on one level, like this one is. But in those days, they built them high, and sometimes even three stories high.

I: How many children did you have in your school?

Merrill: In Manti, in those eight rooms, I imagine we had about a hundred, well, it would be more than that. There were about twenty students to a room, and twenty times eight is how many? That's 160, isn't it? Okay, a little more about the school then. That was in Manti. We moved from Manti to Fairview.

I: How old were you when you quit school?

Merrill: I was in the eighth grade and I was living in Lapoint. Right here where this school sits right now, we had a school here. Our school in Lapoint was a tent. The first year of school in Lapoint was a tent. We went to school, when the crowd got bigger, both in the tent and the little white building. So that was our first experience with the schools in Lapoint. But we moved from Manti to Fairview and I went to the Birch Creek School. That was just a mile and a half from the old grist mill that Dad had bought in Fairview. We had to walk. If it was a long distance, you rode horseback to school, but if it was only a mile or two, you always walked.

In that Birch Creek School there were twenty-three students and I was in the eighth grade. I was the only one in the eighth grade. That was just before we come to Lapoint. More than half of the students in that school was Rasmussens. There was only twenty-three in the

whole school and more than half of them was Rasmussens. They wasn't relation to us exactly. Our family was five of us kids, but we wasn't relations to the other Rasmussens.

One spring, the schoolteacher, Warren Brady, he finally later moved out here to Lapoint, he wanted to go shearing sheep when spring came. So he got a man from Fairview to take his place as the schoolteacher for the last two months of school. When that man came down, he always rode down on horseback. When that man come down, of course, all us kids knew we were going to have a new schoolteacher and we was all excited about it. So we was watching for him and when he comes, I thought that was the ugliest man I'd ever seen. Golly! He was a straight-faced guy, you know, and very sober. I don't believe he ever smiled; I didn't think he did, but *he* did. But finally, I'll just finish this little story, he rang the bell, just a hand bell, you know, a bell like they used to have. He rang the bell, and, of course, all of us come in the school and took our seats and we were just as quiet as mice. So he walked across in front of the school, across the room twice without saying a word, just looking at us. Finally, he said, he just stopped and looked at us and says, "I know what you're thinking!" Just as rude, you know, rough, that's the way he spoke. He said, "I know what you're thinking! You're thinking I'm the ugliest man in the world! But," he says, "I look better looking through a horse collar!"

Do you know what a horse collar is? A horse collar is the collar that goes around a horse's neck and it resembles a picture frame. He thought when he was looking through the horse collar, that put a frame around his face. And he said, "I look better looking through a horse collar!" Well, as sober as we was at that time, everyone had to laugh and he laughed along with us. From that moment on that was the loveliest schoolteacher I believe I ever had. He was so kind and considerate and lovely to get along with. He didn't smile an awful lot. After we come to Lapoint, here, five years later he come to Vernal and was the superintendent of the county schools over here for three years, Heber S. Olson.

Teacher: Oh, I've seen pictures of him.

Merrill: Yep. Heber S. Olson, that was the guy.

I: What was your school like in Fairview?

Merrill: Fairview was another high [tall] school. Now it's a lovely museum down there. It was ten rooms, I believe. Now they've remodeled it. It was a rock building and it was ten rooms, just like the Manti school. That's the way they built them in those days. It's still standing, a lovely building.

I: How did they heat the school and take care of it?

Merrill: We had a stove in the middle of the room. We had a big stove, these big pot-bellied stoves, wood stoves. We heated the rooms with wood, very little coal. Coal was hard to get in Sanpete County, you had to get it from over the mountains. These big stoves, you know, we called them pot-bellied stoves because they'd come out like this, then down. Not always in the center of the room. The one up in Tridell here, it set right in the center of the room and when we'd go up there to dance, we danced around the stove. All the rooms was heated with wood stoves. It might be in the corner, but generally they put it out in the center of the room so there

wouldn't be any cold corners.

I: What was considered to be important schoolwork?

Merrill: History and arithmetic and spelling, and language come last. But them was the important subjects. And then marching. We used to march. They marched us just like soldiers in them schools. When the bell would ring, you lined up out on the playground and the teacher would be there. It wasn't always the teacher. It was somebody, an adult, boy or man, as a rule, he was the master and you had to stand there like soldiers and then he'd give the command and he'd march you all over the daggone playground before he marched you in the building. So, marching was *very* important. Now they never march. You never march, do you? No! We marched then just like soldiers, and I'll tell you, they were strict with us, too. We had to do it just right.

I remember I come in late one day and the guy grabbed me, the captain, 'cause I was late and he says, "Now stand right there! Now mark time! One, two, three, four!" I was marking time like this, you know, putting my feet straight up and down, you know. And I guess I looked pretty funny, too. I'll bet I did. Anyway, all at once he busted out laughing and when he busted out laughing, that let me go and I broke and run and run right into the school. He never come after me.

I: What were the school rules?

Merrill: Discipline. If you went in the room, you was expected to take your seat and keep your mouth shut. Absolutely. The teachers just made the law out. They were very strict. If you got unruly, they stood you over in the corner, with your face in the corner. That was the smaller kids. When they got about your age, of course, they did it different ways. But the smaller kids, they'd stand them in the corner with your face agin the corner and make you stand there for fifteen minutes. Well, you stand in the corner for fifteen minutes, that's quite a while. Then they used a dunce stool in the corner. They'd set you on that dunce stool and you faced the audience, but you had a great big dunce cap on your head, here. They'd make you sit there for a while on that. Then if you didn't get your lessons, they'd keep you in at night. After all the school was dismissed and everybody gone home, there you'd be sitting there with the teacher, getting lessons that you had missed. Sometimes they'd keep you an hour or more. How's that staying there for an hour or more? Just being with the teacher?

I: Did you ever get in trouble?

Merrill: Does kids ever get in trouble? Yes, they do, don't they? Well, not in any real bad trouble or anything. I know I went and stole some eggs one night, or when I was going to school. I stole two eggs and took them down to the store and bought candy with them. Well, I had to take two eggs from home, then, back to those people and apologize for stealing their eggs and going and buying candy.

I: Was there a stove in every room?

Merrill: Yes, there had to be a stove in every room. That's right. There was no central heating

like we have nowadays. You had to have a stove in every room. That meant chimneys. Yep.

I: What kind of games did you play?

Merrill: Okay. The boys would go out on the playground and we'd play stink base, flag raiding, or baseball, or leap frog, or marbles. Marbles was very popular, very popular. For the girls, it was hopscotch, jacks, and flying Dutchman, and drop the handkerchief, and sometimes baseball.

I: Describe your favorite game.

Merrill: My favorite game was stink base. Have many of you know what stink base is?

Teacher: I don't think they know. I'm not sure I know.

Merrill: Stink base was a real fun game. You laid the field off like this and you had the center line here, then you had the stink base right over here and over here. They would dare each other to cross this line here and if you got caught you had to go to stink base. Then it was up to these people to get you off the stink base. They had to sneak out here and touch your hand to get you off. The same over here, vice versa there. It was a real fun game. Flag raiding was very much the same thing. It was a real fun game.

I: How far did the grades go to?

Merrill: Eight. We went through the eighth grade and then you was in Jr. High. Now, my Jr. High, here, the ninth grade was right here in Lapoint. Right on these grounds, right where this building sits. I went to my ninth grade right here. But at that time, when I was in the ninth grade, then we had a lumber building that we had our school in and the tent had been discontinued.

I: Can you describe how schools have changed?

Merrill: Have they ever changed. Our schools in those days was one to eight rooms, I've already described the one schoolroom where Heber Olson was our teacher. There was all eight grades and just one teacher. Just one teacher for all eight grades, twenty-three students, and I was the only one in the eighth grade. Okay, all the buildings was two-story buildings like the ones in Manti and Fairview.

Water was hauled to the schools in a barrel. We used to, when we come to Lapoint here, we lived down on the river bottom, down in Hackfordville, what we call Hackfordville now, on the river bottom. We'd bring up a five-gallon can of water every day for the school. They paid us five dollars a month to bring up that water so the students could have drinking water for the day. Then we'd put it in a little barrel, then take the can back and bring up water the next day. So that was your drinking water.

Then we had to walk to school or ride horseback. Now when we lived four miles down here to Hackfordville, the school was right here on this grounds and when the horses would be busy in the spring, plowing the ground and doing farm work, we couldn't use the horses, so we walked to school. We'd walk four miles here and four miles back a lot of time. Me and my four

brothers and sisters. Eight miles a day. Can you feature that? Can you see how different that is than what it is now? Now the bus picks you up right square at your door.

We wrote on slate or the blackboard. Most of the time we'd write on the blackboard or on a slate. We didn't have too much paper in those early days. Then, hand school bells, outside toilets, one teacher for all eight grades, that's Birch Creek and I've already described Heber S. Olson. That's about the way they was made up, very different. We never seen a carpet, a beautiful carpet like they have now. We never seen these beautiful rooms. They was all walls with plaster, just mud thrown in the walls in the logs, the plaster, and that was the way the walls was. There was no beautiful walls like we have in here now.

I: Did you have to march out to fire drills?

Merrill: I don't remember ever having a fire drill. I almost believe we did in Fairview. I believe they did give us a fire drill a time or two because we had a two-story building, see. It would be important to have a fire drill. I believe they did give us a fire drill.

I: Did you have hot lunches?

Merrill: Our hot lunches was always at home, but at school they was in a little paper bag, a candy bag, and you'd spread some bread and butter, they never had peanut butter in those days, and sometimes a little butter on there and maybe a little piece of cheese or a little jam or something like that and drop it in that paper bag and when you got to school it would be so dried out you could hardly eat it. But that was our lunches. We had to bring our lunch in a little paper bag every day. Then from 12 o'clock to one o'clock we had one full hour to set and eat our lunch. And it was always in a paper bag.

No, we never knew what a hot lunch in school was until right here in this building, right where this sits now and when Roy Marle (?) from Tridell was the principal. I remember, they asked me if I would help in the kitchen, because I was associated with the school. So I helped cook for that first year and Roy Marle (?), the principal, he said to me one day, he says, "I believe these hot lunches has came to stay." And they have. They never did take them away. The grandest thing in the world. The best thing in the world.

I: You had stoves in the middle of the rooms. How did you put the chimney out from the bottom rooms?

Merrill: That chimney would set right behind the stove and it would be a brick chimney. No, it wasn't a brick chimney, we never even knew a brick chimney. In those early days they was always just a stove pipe. They just cut a hole in the ceiling and the stove pipe was just about that big around

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I: Who took care of the stoves?

Merrill: The janitor. We had a janitor who swept the building after school was out. It was just

some adult in the community who did that and he took care of the stove. He'd light the stove in the mornings and he'd come and put the wood in during the day and see to it that it was safe.

I: How many hours did school last?

Merrill: School was from 9 o'clock until 3:30. At 10:15 you had recess for 15 minutes and at 2:15 we had recess for 15 minutes and school started at 9 and quit at 3:30. And we rode horseback to school. We'd have a whole bunch of horses tied up to the fence outside the schoolhouse, all day long, and when the school was out, we went and jumped on our horses, and those that walked, they'd walk home and the rest would ride their horses.

I: Did anybody get hurt on the stoves?

Merrill: Yes. I walked up to the stove once, just to warm my hands, and for some reason or another I put on—that was the only time in my whole life I ever put on roller skates. That was a little later in life because roller skates was not known to begin with in my early life. This was later when I was about 17, just before we come to Lapoint, because this happened in Fairview. I walked up to that stove like that to warm my hands after putting roller skates on and the roller skates started rolling back. Now, I wasn't used to roller skates and the roller skates rolled back and that tipped me forward and I just rubbed my hand down that red-hot stove. I burned them both completely white, just rubbing them down that red-hot stove. So, there was accidents happen, all right.

I: Did your school ever catch on fire because of the stoves?

Merrill: We never did have a schoolhouse catch on fire. We had it burn a little bit there, so that they had to throw water on it, but never get to a flame. Those stoves were kind of dangerous, and that's why people are burning up their trailers so much right now, is because they've gone back to those wood stoves and they don't know how to use them, you see. We've had a lot of trailer fires around in Vernal and all over the area right now from wood stoves because they don't protect that stove pipe that goes out and gets too hot and sets the trailer on fire.

I: Did you ever get held back in school?

Merrill: Yes, when I was in the fifth grade. I had to take that fifth grade two years. I wasn't smart enough to get through the grade in one year, so I had to take it two years. That was in Manti. Yep, if you wasn't up on your lessons, they was strict with us. If you got unruly, why, if they couldn't control you, the teacher, by putting you in the corner, then they'd send you to the principal and the principal would give you a right-good talking-to, and if it was serious enough, he'd take you on his horse and go down and talk to your parents with you. Then if it was serious enough, after he'd talked to your parents, then he'd expel you for one day or a whole week. He'd expel you from school entirely.

I: Did you ever get in trouble with your parents because of a bad report card?

Merrill: I got a good scolding a lot of time. You know, kids are kind of careless. If we don't have to do our lessons, we won't. Our parents almost *made* us do our lessons. "Do your homework!" You hear your mothers say that right now: "Get your homework done!" That's the way it was then. Unless we could get out of it, of course, we'd get in trouble with our parents.

I: Were the teachers and the principals strict?

Merrill: Yes, very strict, very strict.

I: When you had horses tied to the fence, did anybody ever get their horses mixed up?

Merrill: No, you always knew your horses all right. The horses would stand there all day long and then we'd jump on them and away we'd go. They was always different colors and different sizes and that, so you'd never get your horse mixed. Sometimes, some unruly, dang kid would come and cut the strap off of your saddle that you had. Well, we didn't have saddles to begin with. You rode horseback, bareback. You set on a little rug or a quilt or a blanket on the horse, you didn't have saddles. Then later in the years, there begin to come in saddles and sometimes some unruly kid, some bully, that'd come and take his pocketknife and cut off the strap.

I: When the horses were tied up, did any get loose?

Merrill: Oh, yes, but they were pretty well-trained. The horses, sometimes, you didn't even have to tie them. They'd just stick around. They'd just stay right there and wait for you until school was out. No, you didn't always have to tie the horses up, they'd go out and feed in the brush. Around our schoolhouse then was big, tall brush, like this. Greasewood and sagebrush. All this country was nothing but just sagebrush. The first time I ever seen Lapoint was in 1917 when we moved to Lapoint and we came to my uncle's place down here in Frogtown. You know where Frogtown is? That's Hackfordville. We called it Frogtown then because that's where the green pastures was and that's where the water was. There wasn't any water up here in Lapoint. Never had any canals up here, no canals whatever.

My cousin took me out there in Frogtown and he said, "Merrell," my name's Merrell, he said, "You see that little white building up there?" And for the life of me I couldn't see it and so I had to look over his shoulder where he was pointing, finally I got it, a little white building 'way up there in the sagebrush, or in the brush. There was nothing but brush. This country was no farms, none, when I came here, no farms anywhere. And there was that little white building sitting there in the brush and when I got it, I said, "Oh, yeah. That little white spot up there?" And he says, "That's Lapoint." That was it. That's all there was to Lapoint was that little white building, setting there in the brush and that set there for three or four years before they even grubbed the brush around the building. It was the store and the post office.

I: Did you have nurses in your school or who took care of kids who were hurt?

Merrill: We never knew a nurse in those days. We never knew what a nurse was. No, we never had nurses and doctors, there'd only be one doctor in a town. As a matter of a fact, a lot of towns never even had a doctor. But if they did have a doctor, if you needed a doctor he would come to

your place, you never went to the doctor's. He would come to your home. When my children was born down here, I have six daughters, and five of them was born in this house where Rushtons live right down here. Born right in the bedroom in there. Louise, you all know Louise, she's the only one in my family who was born in a hospital and she was born here in Lapoint, well, she was born in Roosevelt, of course, but we were living in Lapoint.

But the doctor would come and the doctor came clean from Roosevelt up here when my children was born and go clean back to Roosevelt and it cost me \$30 for each child for the first doctor bill when they were born. Then the second time I had twins, that cost me \$54, and I'll tell you, that \$54 was hard to get. There was no money in those days. Just no money. And the nurse only cost me \$5 and I just had an awful time. I had to pay her in monthly payments, \$1 a month for five months to get her paid. There was no money.

I: What was a passing grade in school?

Merrill: I don't know. You had to reach a certain level with your schoolwork and only your parents and teachers knew that and if you never reached that level, then you stayed in that grade another year.

I: Did you have a lot of homework at night?

Merrill: Yes, they expected us to do a lot of homework. We didn't do too much work in school. Our work was done at night around the coal-oil light. We never had electric lights or anything like that, just coal-oil lights. You know what those coal-oil lights are like?

Teacher: I remember those when I was a little girl.

Merrill: Yes, well, that's the kind of lights we had. We'd sit around there, at the table and that little old lamp there and do our homework.

I: If you had one teacher, did you have one principal, too?

Merrill: When Heber S. Olson was the teacher for eight grades down in Birch Creek, he was the principal, the teacher and the janitor, too. The teacher did everything.

I: Did you ever get in a fight at school?

Merrill: I was not the fighting kind. No, I was easy to get along with. I don't remember ever getting in a fight. I almost got into a fight with my brother once, but that's the only time. We come just about to hitting each other and then we didn't do it. And that's the nearest of coming to a fight that I ever done in my life. But there was some of those bully boys that they wanted to be fighting every day.

Teacher: We still have that.

Merrill: Yeah. We still have that.

I: How did the teachers give spelling tests? Was that important?

Merrill: Oh, yes, spelling was very important. I'll tell you, we'd have spelling bees, a group on this side and a group on that side and standing like this. The one on lead would do the spelling and if they couldn't do it, why then the next one would take over, and we'd see which side would beat the spelling bees. Spelling was very important.

I: Did you have a gym in your school?

Merrill: Our gym was out on the playgrounds. That's all the gym we had. We'd just grub the brush off around the school and make a playground. There was no such a thing as a gym in those days. We didn't know what a gym was.

I: Did boys play basketball?

Merrill: Oh, basketball, of course, and football was extremely popular. I never knew a basketball nor a football until after I came to Lapoint. I never seen one. I never seen a basketball or a football.

Teacher: So, that must be a newer game.

Merrill: Oh, it's a modern game. I never seen them in all the time I lived Manti, seven years. Before I come to Lapoint I never seen a basketball; I never seen a football. We had a hard ball, baseball. We played baseball.

I: When you tied your horses up, was there ever a big mess, or did the horses get hurt or something? Did the horses ever get loose?

Merrill: Yes, we would have horse accidents quite often. Sometimes a horse would run away. It would just get scared and start to running and get out of control and the one that was riding on the horse either had to fall off or else just hang on until the horse finally quit running. Then a horse would kick. You had to be kind of careful around their hind legs. You could pat them all right, but you had to be kind of careful around their hind legs or they would kick you.

I: When you had recess, did you ever go out and ride your horses?

Merrill: Not at recesses, no. Teachers wouldn't allow us to get on the horses at recess. But, when we was home, good lord, we'd ride all over the hills, everywhere, all over the fields, all over country. Golly, ride up to Whiterocks and back into the Bear Dance up there, go to Vernal with them. It took all day long to go to Vernal on horseback. Then we'd stay all night and come back the next day. Roosevelt was the same distance. Roosevelt and Vernal was a long ways away in those days.

Teacher: How often did you go to town?

Merrill: We never went to town only once about every two months.

Teacher: That would be quite different because most of our families go to town sometimes every day.

Merrill: Almost every day. I'll tell you. No, we never went to town, what you'd call town would be Vernal and Roosevelt. They was a long ways away. When we ever did go, our family members always took our bed and camped and we'd go to the fairgrounds in Vernal and camp on the fairgrounds overnight because it was too big a trip to go over and back the same day. We'd go one day and come back the next.

I: Did your teacher have a desk?

Merrill: Yes. The teacher had a desk in front of the room similar to what they've got now. It was just homemade, some rough boards on top of four legs, but the teacher had a desk. Then the desks us kids set in was in rows, you know. You never sit like you're sitting here now, but the desks sat in rows.

I: When you were riding around with your horses, did the Indians chase you or anything like that?

Merrill: This was the Indian reservation, that is right. There was Indians out here. We moved from Sanpete County to the Indian reservation, that's what they called it. There was Indians out here, but the Indians never bothered us. No, we never had any trouble with the Indians at all.

I: Did you ever skip a grade?

Merrill: Good laws, no. I wasn't that smart. There was some kids who was advanced early. I don't know if ever they skipped a grade, like skipping from four and jumping over five and going into six. I don't think that ever happened.

I: Could you describe the kind of toys you played with at home.

Merrill: In those days the toys that we'd get for Christmas and the things we'd get for Christmas ... One child nowadays gets more toys for that one child than we got for the whole family. The whole family of five or six kids. Nowadays, each child gets more toys and more trinkets and more Christmas presents than the whole family did in that day. We would hang our stockings on the wall because we didn't have fireplaces and things like that. We'd hang our stockings on the wall and when Christmas morning come, why we'd expect some candy, nuts. And candy and nuts was quite cheap, so there'd always be candy and nuts down in our sock and there would be an orange, almost always. Oranges was quite cheap, but bananas! If we ever got a banana that was a real treat. Then there would be one toy and they was usually wooden toys to start out with, made out of wood, a little car or a little imitation train or a little wagon or something like that. That was the kind of toys we had for the boys, a little train like that and we

always pulled them with a string or pushed them by hand. You'd only get one toy, then you'd get some kind of wearing apparel, like a blouse or a pair of pants or shoes, which you always needed, so you always got some kind of wearing apparel for Christmas and that's about all it amounted to. The girls, they could get jacks—color books never came in for about ten years after that. I never seen a color book. Now color books are very popular.

I: Which toy was your favorite?

Merrill: My favorite toy was the trains. To start out with those trains and all was made of wood. Then about seven or eight years later, they made them of tin. And then they put little springs in them and we'd wind them up and they'd run on the floor. Boy, that was exciting. That was my favorite toy. Any toy that would run by itself was my favorite.

I: How many toys did you have?

Merrill: You only had one. Each child only had one toy.

I: If you got only one toy for Christmas each year, would you still have the one from the year before?

Merrill: Usually. They was careful with their toys because they were scarce and we didn't break them like you break up your toys now. They lasted clean through the next year. The girls, they got rag dolls. You know, pretty rag dolls, made up every time. There were jacks for girls and rag dolls and all that kind of things, you know.

I: Did the girls ever play jump rope?

Merrill: Oh, yes. I don't know how I come to miss that. Jump rope was extremely popular.

Teacher: It still is.

Merrill: One or two could jump. Oh, jump rope was *very* popular.

Teacher: It is still one of the most popular games.

Merrill: Oh, it was very popular. It always has been, all through my life. Jump rope has been very, very popular. And marbles. We don't play marbles nowadays, but marbles was very popular. And the girls would play hopscotch.

I: Were you nice to your sisters?

Merrill: Well, I don't think I was too mean, but, of course, you know, sometimes kids have a hard time getting along. I think I was nice to my sisters all the time. I believe I was. I loved them with all my heart, every one of our family members. I loved them as my own folks. I didn't want to disagree with them. I was quite easy to get along with in my life.

I: Did you ever get a train track?

Merrill: It was a long while before tracks came in for those trains to run on. It was years. I was getting to about sixteen years old before I ever seen a train track.

I: Do you still have any of your toys?

Merrill: Well, I do. I have still got some of those that went back into about 1914. I still have. I don't know whether I could find them to show you, but I know I've got some of them.

Teacher: Oh, wouldn't that be something?

I: Did you ever decorate your tree at Christmas?

Merrill: We didn't have Christmas trees. We never had Christmas trees in those days. Just rich people were the only ones that ever had a Christmas tree. Then they'd take paper and make these paper chains, you know. That's the way they decorated them. And popcorn. They'd thread popcorn on a needle and thread and they decorated the trees with popcorn. And we made stars and we made balls out of paper. That's the way trees was decorated. We never seen any elaborate trees among the people who did have trees. We never seen an elaborate tree like we have nowadays.

I: How do you think toys have changed?

Merrill: Toys have changed until it's not believable. From just these little wooden toys, you know what we've got now. These were just little wooden toys that somebody had made and they was just the greatest thing in the world. We was just as pleased with one wooden toy in those days as you kids are now with a dozen. You get too much. You get altogether too much for Christmas. You don't hardly know what you want to play with because you've got so much.

Teacher: How many of your grandparents have said the same thing? Raise your hands.

Merrill: Yes. It's true. We've gone commercialized for Christmas and it's a shame. If we spent \$10 in those days for Christmas, now they spend \$500 for Christmas instead of just \$10. That's a shame.

I: At Christmas time, who usually made the toys around here?

Merrill: It would be neighbors. There wasn't a factory, a company that made toys in those days, not until after we came to Lapoint did we know of any companies that really went out making toys for our children. Your neighbors, your dad, our brothers, or somebody that was kind of handy with carpentry work, would make the toys. Rocking chairs, chairs, many toys, blocks, wooden toys, was popular.

I: Did you ever make your own toys?

Merrill: Oh, yes. I've made a lot of toys. I made a beautiful little cabinet, a kitchen cabinet that stood about that high. It was beautifully painted and beautifully decorated and it had all the drawers in it and I made that for my brother, Rulan, who used to live right over here in this flat-top house, for his kids one Christmas. I furnished all the material and spent three days, four days, making that cabinet and I charged them three dollars and fifty cents for it. Yes, we made all our toys in those days.

I: When you were a child, did you ever get a rocking horse? Were things like that popular?

Merrill: Oh, yes. Now, cradles, wooden cradles, was made then for babies. They'd rock back and forth like this, you know. And we made little horses. Yes, they were made in those days. We did have some of those kinds of things all right.

Teacher: I think you're ready for the last section there.

Merrill: I knew we were crawling down there.

I: How did your family spend their holidays?

Merrill: We spent our holidays here in Lapoint. The 4th of July was a big holiday every year. They had big ball games here, right here was where the ballpark was. Lapoint took state one year, took the whole state of Utah with their baseball. Lapoint took the whole state in 19.... Lawrence Caldwell could tell you exactly what date that was. Yeah, I was going with the Marshall girl, ? Marshall and her brothers and her in-laws, that had married in the family, they were all on this baseball team. They were all grown men, of course, but I'll tell you, they were good. They had nine good players. So, we had real big ball games here every year, and especially on the 4th of July and they went out to Salt Lake and took state, beat everybody in the State of Utah one year. Wasn't that complimentary?

I: Which was your family's favorite holiday?

Merrill: Oh, yeah, I didn't answer the whole question. Going on short trips was a family favorite holiday. Visiting with our family and neighbors was a holiday event. So, we had baseball, we took short trips, five to thirty miles, we never got more than thirty miles away from home, because we always had to go with team and wagon, see, thirty miles is long way with a team and wagon. Now, my choice was short trips and still is.

Teacher: Children today don't think of a holiday as being a short trip. To them trips, they take so many of them, that I don't think they are quite as special as they used to be.

Merrill: Oh, yeah, I don't think those trips are special to you kids like they was special to us. In my young family, with four, five, six little girls, my family was all girls, I never had no boys, just to go the Red Hills and back was a real choice trip, just that far away. We went to Paradise Park

quite a few times. All over this country. I'd take my family and we'd go on all these short trips. Then as roads got better and we got cars, then I'd reach out into Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming and finally when they got better than that, I reached into Canada, and to Mexico, California and now, my last trip, I've been to Hawaii twice and I've been to Europe once. So, you see how as things got better as life went along, we spread our trips out. I love to go tripping. I still do.

I: Did your family's traditions change?

Merrill: No. Our traditions are our likes and dislikes, ain't that what it means? Our likes and dislikes are just about the same. We still like visiting friends, we like to go on trips, we like to come out to the ball teams. Our likes and dislikes haven't changed very much, almost the same.

I: What was your family's favorite trip?

Merrill: Our family's favorite trip was [going] to Yellowstone Park. We went into Canada, the Canadian Rockies. I think Yellowstone Park, just about, has been our favorite family trip.

Teacher: That is a beautiful country, isn't it?

Merrill: Yes, a beautiful country. Yep, and southern Utah has a lot of beautiful country, beautiful country.

I: How was life different for you as a boy than it is for your grandchildren?

Merrill: Oh, is it ever. Good laws, I'll tell you it is. Well, I'll say it was different. In those days we had chores to do. We had pigs to feed, chickens to feed, hay to feed the cattle. Water the stock, haul water in the barrels for the family. Get ice and stack it on the north side of the house for summer use as long as it would last for drinking water and then get a little bowl or a plate or something and scoop up snow and put it in a tub and put it on top of the stove overnight so it would melt the water for the next day's house use. We used to have to do that every night in the winter time when there was snow. We'd dip up a tub full of water, in these wash tubs, you know, and heat it up and put it on the stove and then when we was sleeping, it would melt and give off a good fire under it. Then next morning it would be melted and that was the house water. It was our drinking water, our dish water and when we bathed—you didn't bathe in warm water, then dump it out and get another like we do nowadays. There'd be about five of us bathe in the same water. And we bathed behind the stove. We didn't have a bathroom, we had outdoor toilets, and these big stoves come up like this, you know, clear around there on the back and the bathroom was behind the stove.

Teacher: Any more questions?

Merrill: It's been very good.

I: Did you have a room to yourself when you bathed?

Merrill: No, I'll say not. That stove was in the kitchen and the whole family would be in there when you bathed just behind the stove. There was generally about that much room, just room for that wash tub to sit behind the stove. We'd put a curtain up on that side of the stove and a curtain on this side and then the stove was about this high, you see, and you couldn't see through that. So, you stood back there and the wash tub was here and you had just about that much room to dress in and undress and step in the tub and bathe and then get out and get yourself dressed and come out and then another kid would go in. It was right in the kitchen. There was no bathroom. We never knew a bathroom. We never knew indoor toilets. I was here in Lapoint for years before I knew a bathroom.

Teacher: We really appreciate you coming up here. We have learned a lot, give him a hand. He was wonderful.

Merrill: Now, just before I close. When we lived in Manti, just across from our place, just across the road, was a man named Elder and he had a burro. How many of you know what a burro is? You who don't know what a burro is, you've seen pictures of Mary and Joseph, Mary riding on a donkey? Pictures of Christ when he's riding on the donkey? His mother? Now, that's a burro. Now, how many knows what a burro is? Everyone of you do. Of course, you do.

A burro is a little animal about this high. They are always gray and they've got big, long ears, big, long ears like that. They're slow. Sometimes they get ornery and they'll sit down and you can't get them to go. They'll just sit down on the rope and sit there until they take a notion to get up and go. But they're very useful and the people in the Bible days used burros all the time for their transportation to move from town to town to town to town. Now then, how many knows what kind of a noise a burro makes? [Someone makes the noise.] Okay, you've just about got it!

A burro makes a certain kind of noise and they call it braying. Now a dog barks and a cat mews and a cow moos and a burro brays. Now then, this Elder had a burro over there and three times a day this burro would bray. Now that means he'd make a noise, you know. When he was braying, his head would go up and down like this and his ears would flop like this, when they were braying. You could hear them all over town. They make an awful noise. So, it was just across the road from us and I'd watch that burro a lot of times, braying you know. I'd get the biggest kick out of it. Now, I'm going to show you how he used to do that.

[He does an impression of this, complete with very loud noise.]

That's the way he did that and he did it all over town! Well, it's been a joy being with you.

[Pause in tape. It was turned off, then turned on again. When it begins Merrill is in the middle of a sentence.]

Merrill: Then ride to Tridell, another four miles, five miles and dance all night until two o'clock, then ride back to Lapoint, drop off my date here in Lapoint, whoever she was, then ride back four miles back home. I'd get there just about five o'clock in the morning. The way we used to do that, we'd have a saddle on the horse. In the winter time it was cold, ten below zero. We used to ride from here to Tridell in ten below zero weather. I tell you, that was cold weather. We'd take a quilt and put it across the saddle. It would lop over in the front a little and then down in the saddle and, of course, it would hang down, clean down the side of the horse on both sides and

then it would come back up over the back of the saddle and back on the horse about that far. And the young man would set back of the saddle, on the back there, and set on that quilt and that way he wouldn't get the horse's hair all over his pants, his dance pants. Because horses used to shed and hair would come loose, you know, and you'd have yourself just lined with horsehair if you didn't do that. So, the young man'd set back of the saddle on this quilt, the young lady would sit in the saddle and then we'd pick up the corner of the quilt here and we'd bring it up like this. It would come right up across the young lady's lap and reach clean over on this side a little ways and while it was doing that, it would come on my lap, too. Then, you'd reach down and pick that up and bring it over this way, so then it lapped over on the young lady's lap about that far. Then it would come right around me, riding behind the saddle.

The young ladies always did the driving. They'd drive the horses in them days, because the young man was setting behind them. It was harder for him to drive and the young ladies was good horseback riders. All the young ladies was real good horseback riders, so they handled horses just as good as the men did. If you ever had a cake or pie or popcorn or something you was taking to the party, the young man, he'd have to put his arms around the young lady like this and hold the pie in front of her, or the popcorn or the cake, or whatever it was and she would be driving on top of that, holding the reins, see. So, here you are with your arm around the young lady holding the pie in front of her. But it was *so* much fun. We used to say, "the longest way around was the sweetest way home." And I guess that's what it was. I come from Lapoint and over there, make a nine-mile trip because of them dang dances and then back again. But we thought it was fun.

So, we called them the good old days. Now one guy said, "There's one thing that's good about the good old days: they're gone!" But, I look back at the good old days; we didn't know anything was better. We was really having hard times, but I look back at those days as good old days. We had *so* much fun. We never had no money. We never had luxuries and fine clothes. When we'd go to parties, we always had to take our sugar, because sugar was short and if you went to a party, you always had to take sugar. If you went to your friends' to eat dinner with them, you always took your sugar with you because you was only allowed so much sugar for each family. So, you wouldn't go over to your friends' and eat up their sugar because they was only allowed so much. If you went to your friends', why, you'd take your sugar.

Teacher: It's hard to believe that people had to do things like that.

Merrill: Oh, golly, yes. The hardships we went through in those days, you just can't believe how hard they was. But we didn't know any different. I slept out in a tent the first two years we come to Lapoint and in that ten below zero, you know, and we'd get quilts stacked on top of us like that out in that tent. By morning there would be little icicles where our breath would hang down. See your breath's got a little moisture in it, and when you're breathing out through the little holes in those quilts, just big enough for your nose, there'd be little icicles about that long, hanging on your chin. So, when you got out of bed, it was ten below zero. I'll tell you, you was cold! Brrr! I'll tell you, you jumped in your clothes right quick and was gone! The same when you went to bed. You'd come and jerk your clothes off and jump into bed!

One morning, just three days before Christmas, when I first come to Lapoint, I was excited about the little animals we had out there, prairie dogs and skunks and all those kinds of things, you know. I was excited about them. So, three days before Christmas I found a hole down

in the field and I thought there was something in it, but I didn't know what. But, I put a trap there. Of course, like a kid is, I was excited. I got out of the bed early that morning and run down there in the field, about a quarter of a mile away, to see if I had anything in the trap. When I come around this bush, why, sure enough, the chain was down the hole and it was tight and so there was something on the end of the chain.

So, I went over there and took hold of the chain and it was tight, a little chain about that long and it was on a stake. You see, you'd put a stake in the ground and a trap on the other end. This little animal had got on the trap, then it went down the hole. So the chain was tight and I took a hold of it like that and tried to pull it and I couldn't pull it out. It was wedged down in there. Of course, the animal, he just stretched out against the bank, the wall, so's you couldn't pull him out. So, what my idea was, I got me a stick about that long and I thought, well, now, I'll take and pull that out with my one hand and when it comes out I'll hit it on the head with a stick and I'd kill it, see.

So, I got hold there, and I couldn't pull it with that hand. I had the stick in this hand. So, I laid the stick down and pulled with both hands. And I was pulling back here like this and all at once it give loose and out it come and it was a skunk. And I had three little, yellow strips right across me just like that. I thought I would die. You know what a skunk scent smells like? Well, when you get it straight on your nose, you know what it smells like. Well, I jumped up and down and there was a creek that was just about one hundred feet away and there was ice on top of the creek and I run down to that creek as hard as I could run and it was froze over and I got on the ice and I jumped up and down like that and all at once I broke through and I went down in the water about that deep. Remember, this was three days before Christmas. I throwed water on my face like this.

That skunk scent doesn't come off very easy. It sets on pretty solid. It was cold, before daylight, before sunup, just daylight. I was headed to the house, my clothes were just soaking and my face. So, I had to walk a quarter of a mile to the house and by the time I got up to the house, I couldn't hardly walk because my overalls were froze stiff. They wouldn't bend and I went in the house and just stepped in the door, I was danged near froze to death, I just stepped in the door and Dad was just getting out of bed and he said, "Get out of here!" Boy, he grabbed me and pushed me out into the cold. I had to go out in that tent then and he threw me some dry clothes and I had to take all those wet clothes off and they was so stiff I couldn't get them off. I couldn't slip my legs out of them and put on my dry clothes. Now imagine doing that at ten below zero, just before Christmas.

So then, just a few days later, I'd kind of learned something then. So I went down there, I was still doing some trapping. I had to bury all my clothes and put dirt all over them. I couldn't use them for a month after that because I'd put the dirt all over them, so I couldn't use those clothes. But Old Bruno, the dog, he went down with me and we walked down there to that same place and when we got to that brush, the hole was over here and there was some brush right here and we was walking here, and you just come around that brush and there was the hole. The dog was trotting along beside of me and when we got close to that brush, I said, "Sic him, Bruno!" You know, when you say "Sic 'im!" to a dog, the dog will run ahead just like that. So the dog run ahead then and when he come to the edge of that brush, he looked down there and sees an animal down and, of course, dogs run after animals, that's what they do, especially when you sic 'em on. So, he just turned and run right down there like that and there was a skunk in that same dang hole. The skunk just let him have it. The dog opened his mouth just like this to grab that skunk

and the skunk let him have it right square in his mouth. Oh, have you ever seen a sick dog! Oh, did he ever cough and spit and swallow. I thought, “Oh, Bruno, I know how you feel!”

But, we had so much fun. Stealing watermelons... I never stole watermelons. One night Louise stole a watermelon. You all know Louise. I was in the [LDS] Mutual and she was supposed to come to Mutual and when she didn't show up—I was in the presidency of the Mutual—and when Louise didn't show up, I was concerned about that because she should have been to that Mutual.

She never showed up until after I got home for about an hour and a half or two hours after that and I was quite perturbed with her. When she did come, I really scolded her. Finally, she broke down and she said, “Well, Daddy,” she said, “Yes, we should have been to Mutual all right, but four of us went up to Tridell stealing watermelons.” So, she told me the whole story.

They went up to Tridell, to Glade McKee and his watermelon patch. It was down quite a ways from his house and they stopped the car there and the two boys—there was two girls and two boys—and the two boys got out and crawled through the fence and went up to the watermelon patch and the two girls sit in the car, waiting for the boys to get the melons and bring them back to the car. While the boys was in the melon patch getting melons, here come Duane McKee walking down the road. He walked right down to that car and could just see the two girls sitting there, so he got in the back seat of the car. He just sit there with the girls. The boys, they learned he had come, because they had heard them talking. They could hear him talking to the girls. So the boys, they wouldn't come out of the melon patch because the owner of the melon patch was in the car with the girls.

They set there for an hour and the boys wouldn't come back, and Glade knew darned well they wouldn't come back as long as he was there, so he just picked up the guitar. They had a nice new guitar, belonged to Dallin Cox, he was one of them. Duane just picked up the guitar and he left the car and took the guitar and went up to his home. And left them to it. Of course, when he was gone, the boys come back, and Louise and them, they come back to Lapoint and, of course, they was two or three hours late.

So that's the story she told him. But the boys accused her of letting Duane take that guitar. The guitar belonged to one of the boys and he was mad about the girls letting him take that. So Louise, she felt very guilty because he had that guitar. So, two weeks later she went up to Glade McKee's and apologized for stealing them melons and he gave her the guitar back.

Then one more little story, then I'll quit. I was living out here where Hubers live, where Marv Huber lives, that's the house we lived in. It was the granary. The granary, I believe, is still there. That new house wasn't there then. I suspicioned, all of our family went to Mutual, and I suspicioned there'd be somebody come stealing melons that night. The melon patch was just right outside the house. So, I stayed home. I didn't go to Mutual. I could peek through the logs on the house, the cracks in the logs and I could see the melon patch out there. I had a lantern put out in the melon patch so it would make a light out there, so if they come into the melon patch, I could see 'em. And sure enough, here they come through the corn and out into the melon patch. But they'd only slip out just a little ways and grab the melon and back into the corn. They didn't go out into the melon patch very far because that lantern made a light and they knew dang well why that lantern was there: so I could see 'em. And I could see 'em all right.

So, when there's about three of them out there gettin' melons, I picked up the gun, about that long, Dad's old gun, it was hanging above the door, and I'd never had that in my hands in my life, great, big gun. I picked that up and I run out the east door where they wouldn't hear me

or see me or anything and I run up north about three hundred feet, then down, across the canal there where Espins live now, that's where the bridge was. I crossed the canal, then I come down along the west side of the canal and the canal bank was that high and I could walk on the west side of the canal. The bank was like this, then there was the canal, then the field there, and there was a corn patch there and the fence here and the pasture over here and a fence here. I knew dang well they had to get into that corn patch somewhere, so they'd put a plank across the canal. I knew they had to do that and that's the reason I done that. I come down there looking for that plank. I kept peeking over to see if I could see that plank. Sure enough, there was a plank about that wide, about twelve feet long, across the canal there, up there by Hubers.

So, I just stayed on the west end of that plank, because I knew they'd have to come across that plank to get away. I waited for them. There wasn't anyone there when I got there, but first thing you know, here they come. There was eight of them. They come down through the corn and two or three of them come down through the pasture. They cut across the fence and come down through the pasture. When they got there, they all had melons, nice, big melons. So, they crawled through the fence, just in the corner of the pasture. Here's the pasture, here's the corn patch and here was the canal. They crawled just into the pasture there and they all sit down. One guy took out his pocket knife and he opened the melon lengthwise, this way. The melon just fell open like that, a big, beautiful, red watermelon, you know. He just ripped it that way, and it just fell open.

I thought, "Now's my time." So, I came up over that plank and I started to walkin' across that plank. I got halfway across before anyone saw me. They was looking at the watermelon and didn't happen to see me. It was dark, of course, it was at night, so they didn't see me until I got halfway across that plank. When they did see up, they come up just like that, you know! The whole bunch of them jumped right up. When they jumped up, I let that old gun fly. I shot right up in the air, like that. And boy! That shot fired up out that far. It kicked so hard, it almost kicked me in the canal! I'll tell you, them guys left. All those in the pasture went up through the pasture as hard as they could run. Three of 'em tried to get back through the fence into the corn and as they was going through the barbed wire fence, you know, they was in such a hurry, they ripped their pants, right there on the barbed wire fence.

Well, they all left me. Everybody left. Well, I climbed over the fence there and I had two brand new seamless sacks. They cost about a dollar and a quarter a piece for those beautiful seamless sacks and then I picked up that pocket knife and it was a brand new knife! And there was about seven melons there. So, I just took as many melons as I could carry up to the house, then come and got another load and carried them up to the house. Well, one of those guys was the guy, Art Taylor, who I lived next to me up here. He was one of those guys that tore his pants when he was going through the fence.

Well, those are just experiences of a lifetime and they were so much fun, even though they was kind of crude and rough. But that's just early-day fun. We had a lot of fun. We was having hard times, but we didn't know it.

I sure appreciate coming and chatting with you. It has been a lot of fun. Thank you.

End of tape.